

A STATEMENT ON VIDEO Ernest Gusella 1979

IN THE PAST YEAR I HAVE MADE THREE TRIPS TO EUROPE- SHOWING AND LECTURING ON MY VIDEO-TAPES AT MUSEUMS, GALLERIES, AND ART SCHOOLS. ON MANY OF THESE OCCASIONS I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO EXPLAIN THE WORK - EVEN AFTER THE AUDIENCE HAS SPENT AN HOUR OR TWO VIEWING IT. SINCE THE MATERIAL WHICH I HAVE DEVELOPED RELIES SO LITTLE ON LANGUAGE, THERE APPEARS TO BE A COMMUNICATION GAP BETWEEN THE ARTIST AND THE PUBLIC ON EVEN PURELY VISUAL MATTERS. IN ATTEMPTING TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM, I HAVE DEVELOPED A FLIP ANSWER, BASED ON MY OWN PERSONAL HISTORY AND AESTHETIC TENDENCIES - "MY ART IS 1/4 FORNICALIA FUNK, 1/4 NEW YORK PUNK, 1/4 EUROPEAN BUNK, AND 1/4 CANADIAN SKUNK". DESPITE THE FACT THAT THIS ANSWER EXPLAINS EVERYTHING IN MY OWN MIND, IT USUALLY GENERATES MORE QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE, SO I HAVE RESIGNED MYSELF TO THE FATE THAT FURTHER EXPLANATIONS ARE NECESSARY.

EXPERTS HAVE STATED THAT THE PURPOSE OF ART IS TO CLARIFY, HOWEVER IN MY OWN CASE (KNOWING MYSELF SO WELL), AND DISBELIEVING A LOT OF WHAT IS WRITTEN ABOUT ART, I TEND TO IGNORE WHAT ART MEANS IN A SOCIAL SENSE, AND TO PUSH ON INTO OTHER AREAS WHICH I FEEL COULD BE OF INTEREST TO MYSELF. THIS MAY SEEM LIKE AN ARROGANT ATTITUDE TO SOME, BUT AS A SOCIAL BRING THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING THAT AN ARTIST COULD POSSIBLY ENGAGE IN THAT DOES NOT HAVE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND AESTHETIC RAMAFICATIONS BEYOND THE WORK ITSELF, WHICH AN AUDIENCE CAN RELATE TO (IF IT WANTS TO). ACTUALLY, MY WORK HAS PROVED TO BE VERY ACCESSIBLE - EVEN TO THOSE WHO HAVE HAD LITTLE EXPOSURE TO MODERN ART OR VIDEO.

I CONSIDER MYSELF TO BE AN ECLECTIC ARTIST WHO GETS EASILY BORED WITH THINGS IN THE PRESENT, AND THIS COULD BE THE MAJOR IMPETUS IN MY DESIRE TO CONTINUE FURTHER EXPLORATIONS IN THE VIDEO MEDIUM. I PROBABLY WOULD LIKE TO BE A FORMALIST, BUT RESENT THE ELITISM THAT A FORMALIST STANCE REQUIRES. INSTEAD I AM PROBABLY A NEO-ROMANTIC - A PERSON WHO ONCE STRONGLY BELIEVED IN A CERTAIN SET OF PRINCIPLES, AND WHO, FOR SOME REASON STOPPED BELIEVING, AND IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS OF TRYING TO DEVELOP A NEW SET OF PRINCIPLES THAT CAN BE BELIEVED IN. AS A NEW MEDIUM, VIDEO IS THE PERFECT TOOL WITH WHICH TO SATISFY THESE PARTICULAR DEMANDS. HOWEVER, AS A NEW MEDIUM, VIDEO HAS DEVELOPED ITS OWN UNIQUE AESTHETIC IN A REMARKABLY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, AND IT IS THE OBLIGATION OF THE SERIOUS ARTIST TO AVOID CLICHES AND ATTEMPT TO TRANSCEND THE BOUNDARIES AND DEFINITION OF THE MEDIUM. THIS REQUIRES AN AWARENESS ON THE PART OF THE ARTIST, BUT ALSO DEMANDS AN ADDITIONAL EFFORT IN DEVELOPING AN AUTHENTIC PERSONAL STATEMENT WHICH CAN BE REGARDED AS UNIQUE. BASICALLY, ALL OF MY WORK IS ABOUT THINGS WHICH TURN ME ON - EITHER VISUALLY, MENTALLY OR THROUGH SOUND, AND ARE RITES OF PASSAGE TO THAT ULTIMATE FUTURE IN WHICH ALL THE BEST ASPECTS COALESCE.

ANOTHER QUESTION I HAVE OFTEN BEEN ASK BY BOTH ARTISTS AND NON-ARTISTS ALIKE IS: "AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF BEING VICTIMIZED BY HAVING TO RELY ON SOPHISTICATED MACHINES TO MAKE YOUR ART?". (THE ROMANTIC VIEWPOINT). MY ANSWER USUALLY GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS: "IF YOU CAN PROVE TO ME THAT YOU DID NOT RELY ON A MACHINE TO GO ON LIVING TODAY - EITHER FOR TRAVEL, TO EAT, FOR INFORMATION, TO MAKE ART, OR ANYTHING ELSE, I WILL QUIT USING MACHINES TO MAKE ART". BESIDES, AS MARSHALL MCLUHAN SAYS "MACHINES ARE MORE INTERESTING THAN PEOPLE, THEY DON'T TALK BACK".

-ERNEST GUSELLA
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